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ABSTRACT

From 1965 until the late 1980s, the education faculty in Alberta offered the same diverse set of programs to its students without substantial change in either form or content. By 1990, there were 13 B. Ed. programs with 9 majors and 10 minor programs at both the elementary and secondary levels, post graduate diplomas in 32 fields, plus M.Ed., M.A., M.S., and Ph.D. programs, with D.Ed. programs added in 1994. Because of budget cuts, student to faculty ratio went from 16:1 to 30:1 and may soon increase to 40:1. A 1993 report published by the Alberta Teachers Association concluded that Alberta's universities were not providing teachers with the professional status and backgrounds to survive in the schools which now exist. The academic model in place for university-based teacher education programs looked to the academy and the structure of disciplines to construct the ideal teacher education program. This paper suggests a professional model in which the rationale for creating and delivering courses is based on the nature of teaching in schools rather than the structure of academic disciplines. The characteristics of the model are described as well as issues in its implementation. Finally, organizational and structural changes made at the University of Alberta are outlined along with reactions from faculty, school districts, and communities. (ND)

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THE CONTEXT FOR CHANGE IN TEACHER EDUCATION IN ALBERTA

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The Fiscal, Social and Political Context

As is in the case in most North American jurisdictions, it is the Minister of Education of the Province of Alberta who issues licenses to teach in the Alberta schools which are tax-supported. Faculties of education of the provincial universities provide the teacher preparation programs and recommend candidates to the Minister for certification or licensing as teachers.

One of the longest standing teacher associations in North America is the Alberta Teachers Association, to which, by statute, every Alberta practising teacher must belong (with some minor exceptions). This powerful voice of the teachers in the Province maintains a very strong professional development program and negotiates contracts on behalf of teachers.

Alberta teachers have over the years been very proud that Alberta universities have had very strong Faculties of Education which provided a 4-year Bachelor of Education degree program and for those who already possess a first bachelor's degree, a 2-year post-baccalaureate B.Ed. program. Every teacher in Alberta must have a university degree, and for most, it is a B.Ed. degree. Accordingly, faculties of education are important features of Alberta universities. In addition to strong undergraduate programs, Alberta universities also created and supported large and strong graduate programs in education departments. At the zenith of Alberta's faculties of education, almost every Canadian university could count an Alberta faculty of education graduate among its deans or senior department heads.

Politically, educators were important in Alberta. Since the 1930's former teachers and others with important ties to public education were members of the governing cabinet. Educators, organized as bureaucrats in the Department of Education, and with strong times to the Alberta Teacher Association staff group and University deans made all the important decisions in education.

During the 1980's the status of the faculties on campus began to decline. One major reason was the changing demographic shape of the Canadian population which required fewer teachers. The graduates of the faculties were less in demand. Paradoxically,

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applications for admission to all faculties of education in Canada continued to increase, to the point when in the late 1980's and early 1990's, every faculty was receiving 3 to 10 times of qualified applicants than they were able to admit in their programs.

It was also in the late 1980's that the central administrators of the universities began to cut back on the resources allocated to faculties of education; the faculties began to lose resources; graduate programs were the first to be cut.

Public support for education began to wane. The proportion of tax-payers (and voters) with school-aged children or grand-children reportedly became a minority in many parts of Canada. Rising government deficits in the early 1990's gave right-wing politicians a popular platform, and the public sectors of health, education and social services became targets for fiscal cuts. Government leaders began to refer to educational leaders not as partners but as members of interest groups. The "real stake-holders" in this new context became the tax-payers.

The government also attacked the idea that only universities could provide teacher preparation programs. As part of its policy of privatization, it approved the creation of B.Ed. programs in two small private colleges. It encouraged two universities to establish partnerships with community colleges whereby students could complete teacher education programs in their own community colleges without ever seeing the University which would grant them their degrees.

The President of the University of Calgary read the politics quite well in 1992 and ordered the University to plan for major cut-backs. The University embarked on a five year plan whereby each academic department would be cut by 17% and each non-teaching department would be cut by 20%. One year into this program, the Government of the Province of Alberta announcement a 21% reduction in grants to universities over a 3-year period.

A major consequence of these fiscal measures was a cut in employees. For example, at The University of Calgary, the faculty of education went from a maximum of 125 FTE professors during the 1980's to today's 63. In 1998, we expect to have approximately 50 regular tenure track professors with an FTE count of approximately 55.

From 1965 to today, the faculty continued to offer the same rich and diverse set of programs to its students without substantial change in either form or content. By 1990 13 B.Ed. Programs with 9 majors and 10 minor programs at both the elementary and secondary levels, post graduate diplomas in 32 fields, and a full range of M.Ed., M.A., M.Sc. and Ph.D. programs. In 1994 we added D.Ed. programs. For the past decade, the faculty has had a

quota of 1200 FTE undergraduate students and 800 FTE graduate students. From a rich ratio of 16:1 students to faculty in the 1980's we are currently at a ratio of 30:1 and one scenario has that ratio dropping to 40:1 in the near future. Well of course we are going to change how we do things!

The Academic Context[1]

The organizational structure of the Faculty of Education at the University of Calgary was designed to promote educational research. There were four departments, each with a strong chair, which ran its graduate programs. One department also had responsibility for teacher education in addition to its research responsibilities. But the Teacher Education Department did not have the staff or resources for the teacher preparation programs. Most of the staff and resources had to be obtained, through a negotiated process, from the other Department Chairs. An Associate Dean, with none of the resources of a Department Chair, was nominally responsible for teacher education. Consequently programs did not change much (no significant change was made in over 20 years from the 1970's to 1995.)

In 1993, the Alberta Teachers Association published an important document entitled *Trying to Teach: Necessary Conditions*. The authors stated that the following are in part the necessary conditions to support effective schools in the foreseeable future.

1. Schools should be communities. The report strongly argues that we must do away with the idea that a school is a bureaucratic, or military institution with cadres of officers and a technical mission. The notion of community conjures up the image of interacting individuals and groups each contributing to the commonweal of the community. In the community model, I would suggest, leadership arises from various segments of the community from time to time as the abilities and motivations of individuals and the needs of the community interact. Leadership is not necessarily "office-holding", and office-holders do not have life-time sinecures.

2. Teachers should be considered as professionals who are part of a collegial and reflective enterprise. Teachers should consult, support and draw from others in the school. Teachers should have the time, ability and motivation to reflect on their teaching and the needs of colleagues and students. The processes of interactions and reflection set the stage for professional development, school-

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[1]Portions of the following section are from R. O'Reilly, (1995) Preparing teachers for the world of *Trying to Teach*. In T. Gougeon et al. (Editors). **Directions: A Conference on Teacher Education. Conference Proceeding.** Edmonton: The Alberta Teachers Association, 11010-142 Street NW, Edmonton, Canada, T5N 2R1.

based decision-making and improved educational services for students.

3. The learning needs of the students are the determining factors for the activities, resources, and policies of the school. Although many individuals play a variety of important roles in determining what occurs in the school, teachers should bear the responsibility for professional decisions that are made in the school.

The report concludes with recommendations for many players in the educational enterprise. The authors of the report recommend that *teacher preparation institutions* specifically prepare teachers to work in school communities in a reflective, collegial manner. In particular, universities are called upon to assist in the development of "professional development experiences that are systematic, ongoing, school centred and based on teacher identified needs".

Our universities were not providing teachers with the professional status and backgrounds to survive in the schools which now exist. Like most university-based teacher education programs, we had adopted an *academic model* of teacher education. This academic model looked to the academy and the structure of disciplines to construct the ideal teacher education program. As professors discerned what knowledge and skill was required by teachers, these ideas were carefully integrated by professors into elaborate, elegant and comprehensive courses. Professors gave academic knowledge priority. The profession and government had to struggle with universities to ensure that a suitable internship or practicum experience was available to students before they graduated as teachers.

How have these university-based programs been evaluated?

In 1976, one university commissioned a "Presidential Task Force to Assess and Evaluate the Faculty of Education". In summary, the Task Force reported that the Faculty had failed as an academic institution and that a majority of its graduates did not feel that it had adequately prepared them for the profession of teaching. I am quite confident that a similar task force at any other young university would have come to similar conclusions. But perhaps the model only needed time to prove itself?

In 1987, the ATA published a review of several teacher education evaluation studies conducted in the Province of Alberta. The review was written by Erwin Miklos and Myrna Greene, both senior members of Alberta Faculties of Education. Their conclusions were as follows:

> 1. The philosophy underlying pre-service preparation programs is not understood by prospective teachers....they may merely select

courses in accordance with certain requirements.

> 5. The expectation which teachers have for acquiring a general education is fulfilled to a greater extent than is the expectation for being introduced to practical aspects of teaching and for learning specific teaching skills.
>
> 7. The close integration of theory and practice is viewed as an ideal which should be pursued in the interest of improved teacher preparation programs.

If I may editorialize from this report, the University is more successful at preparing scholars than professionals.

At about the same time, the Province of Ontario (Canada) was reviewing its teacher education programs. The Ontario Committee of academics, teachers and bureaucrats acknowledge their debt to seminal writings on Ontario teacher education by Michael Fullan and Michael Connolly. They recommend policy and administrative changes, such as the creation of an Ontario College of Teacher Education, the extension of teacher education from one year of post-degree studies to a two year program (an objective recently reiterated in the recent Ontario Commission on Learning) and other modifications to the basic academic model of preparing teachers.

A group of professors and students in the Departments of Elementary Education and Educational Psychology of the University of Alberta recently (1992) concluded a study of Teachers' Perspectives for Alberta Education. In this naturalistic study, case studies of several teachers' perspectives were made. Here is what they said about their University programs.

> Courses in the undergraduate education were an enigma. As seen by the students they are at best good and too often very poor. As a part of the bachelor of education degree program, they ranked far behind the practicum component as the most valuable aspect of undergraduate study. (p. 26)
>
> Mixed reviews were received when discussing the basic education course components, for example:
>
> Tracey could name a few university classes that she felt had been particularly useful to her, including one on Reading for Early Childhood, a Curriculum and Instruction course that involved assembling a teaching file, and

> an Educational Foundations course where students were encouraged to develop their own philosophies of teaching. (p. 27).
>
> Clearly the practicum component was seen as the most significant aspect of the teacher's university career.
>
> [From a student's remarks]. The final practicum proved to be a rich source of practical ideas which had not been covered in university courses. She found the final practicum challenging, demanding, and meaningful. (p. 28).

The authors of the report admit that their recommendations which follow from this study presume a reconceptualization of teacher education programs. In general, the authors recommend that professors work more closely with schools, bring the students to the school and bring the school to the University. The authors then cite (with approval) the work by L. S. Tafel (1984) (Future Paradigm for Teacher Education, *Action in Teacher Education, 6* (1-2), 1-6).

> students should be involved in goal setting and program planning in order that they might understand the underpinning values of a teacher education program.

However, the authors of the report do not go far enough. They have laboured to perfect an academic model and there is little or no reconceptualization.

There is one optimistic report of the effectiveness of a university-based teacher education program, and that is a recent report by Myrna Greene and Cathy Campbell entitled *Becoming a teacher: the contribution of teacher education* (Greene & Campbell, 1993). This is a study of 12 teacher education students and the changes they experienced as they progressed in the program at the University of Lethbridge. These students reported that their programs were integrated, that courses bridged the theory-practice gap, that school experiences were powerful, and that the university contributed greatly to their success as teachers. Borrowing from a conference presentation by Alan Tom, the authors make the following points in discussing the results of their study.

> 1. Short intensive experiences (from one class to 3 weeks) can produce a great deal of learning, *but the amount of learning is immeasurably enhanced when opportunities were provided and structured to encourage reflection on and discussion about that learning.*

2. The experience of the students suggests that "practice before knowledge" or "practice into theory" is at least as powerful as the reverse.

3. Significant early field experiences would seem to be necessary and important in teacher education.

4. Grouping professors into "mixed teams" who work together with groups of students (what the authors refer to as "vertical staffing") facilitates the integration of student learning.

5. Students progressed in their programs as a group (cohort). This appeared to be one of the most valuable aspects of the program....The value of including a component to specifically address interpersonal and communication skills and provide peer support was clearly demonstrated. The students entered the teaching profession with an orientation toward cooperation and collaboration.....

6. Practicums long enough to allow students to assume full responsibility for the class for a period of time would appear to be necessary; support and feedback for the teacher during the practicum is essential; and third...without on-campus components and the opportunity to reflect on and learn from their practicum, the student teaching experience becomes simply an apprenticeship which is only as good or bad as the particular situation allows.

7. Students must be provided with the skills of reflection sand a multitude of opportunities to practise those skills.

In recent years there have been other attempts to reconceptualize teacher education. One may note the Partnership School Practicum Project and the revised Partnership School Practicum Project at the University of Alberta, the On-site Teacher Education Project at the University of Ottawa, and proposed Clinical Schools associated with the University of Calgary's programs.

I suggest that we begin to reconceptualize teacher education in terms of a **PROFESSIONAL MODEL** rather than as AN ACADEMIC MODEL. The PROFESSIONAL MODEL would have components suggested by the conclusions of the Greene & Campbell study. However, the rationale for creating and delivering courses and experiences would not be the structure of academic disciplines but the nature of teaching in schools itself. (This assumes that pre-service students have obtained or will be given opportunities to obtain mastery of the subjects that they intend to teach).

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROFESSIONAL MODEL

1. The source of the curriculum is the activity of teaching.

2. School experiences are provided at the beginning and throughout the education program.

3. Clinical teachers in the schools which are organized as communities would take larger roles than at present for organizing school experiences and assisting the students to reflect on and learn from those experiences.

4. School staff members as members of school communities would play a larger role in the development and assessment of teaching skills (students would be assigned not to individual teachers but to schools).

5. Students would progress through their programs as part of cohort learning groups.

6. University faculty would be grouped into interdisciplinary teams, each team responsible for groups of students.

7. Seminars in various fields such as learning theory, the social and administrative context of the school, professional and teaching ethics, would be led by teachers and professors; students would gradually assume responsibility for identifying study topics based upon their in-school experiences and reflections and identified gaps in their own understanding.

8. Universities (and schools) would develop "mini-block-courses" to provide students with knowledge and skills that students identify as important.

9. Final assessment of students would be a joint university-profession decision based upon demonstrated skills, knowledge and understandings, preferably through a form of portfolio assessment.

10. The involvement of many partners in the schools for teacher education purposes will contribute to the professional development of all teachers in the building.

11. Reflection and collegiality will lead to action research projects conducted by teams of professors, teachers, students and other partners in the schools. This should direct educational research to critical issues for classroom practice and school operations.

ISSUES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MODEL

Any major shift, particularly a shift in the basic model of human activity, is difficult to implement. Although there are many

who are ready to embrace the new conception of a professional model for teacher education, there are many issues to consider, and I have listed below only a few which come to mind.

1. All educators must carefully consider the professional model of teacher education and must be willing to discuss the model and promote its advantages to various stakeholders.

2. Teacher educators, with educators in general, will have to carefully draft a set of competencies (intellectual and practical) that teachers will require to perform in the schools.

3. Methods must be found whereby teacher education students can deal with the complexities of teacher and school life throughout their teacher education programs.

4. School principals must be able to create school communities where sharing, collegiality and reflection are the norm. A major task for all school principals will be the task of community building.

5. Teachers in practice and educational systems must accept their share of the responsibility for teacher education. Teacher preparation institutions in some cases may only be the facilitators and coordinators of the programs.

6. Resources must be found for school personnel to actively participate in the teacher education and induction processes.

7. Rules must be altered so that teacher education students can fulfil some teaching roles in the schools in order to compensate for the schools' contributions to the teacher education programs.

8. Faculties of Education must find support within the university for a flexible, school-based program and any required changes to university and faculty regulations and practices.

The Change

By 1993, then, there were social, fiscal and political forces for change. By 1993, the Faculty realized that its offerings would no longer serve to provide the educators that our society required.

In 1994, the University appointed an outsider as the new Dean of Education.

To solve our problems, in the Fall of 1994, we announced

1. The proposed abolition of Departments in the Faculty of Education and the creation of a Division of Teacher Education.

2. The creation of a task force to study teacher education and to propose a model which would meet the needs of society in the next century and would make the University a leader in the field of teacher education.

A year later the task force tabled a radical proposal. With some modifications, the proposal was accepted and the following announcement were made in late 1995.

1. The closure of the 4-year B.Ed. Degree and the development of plans for a new post-degree Master of Teaching Degree, for which the only admission requirement would be a first university degree, preferably in the liberal and sciences. The changes would take effect in the Fall of 1997.

2. The appointment of an Assistant Dean for Teacher Education who would have broad powers to assign teaching responsibilities to all members of the Faculty and who would be the executive officer of the Teacher Education Division.

3. A group of students would be asked to volunteer to register in the first trial of the new program in the Fall of 1996.

The initial reaction to the announcements were as follows:

1. Faculty mourned the loss of their departmental affiliations. The members of the Department of Educational Psychology lobbied hard to retain their departmental status. They prevailed. It remains as the only department in the Faculty today.

2. Generally, faculty members recognized the need for change and many became excited by the new challenges and the opportunity to offer the "best program in the world".

3. School principals and administrators were excited by the plans and many offered their assistance and their schools as training sites.

4. The Alberta Teachers' Association initially were quite reactionary. The proposed school-based plans were not accounted for in their various collective bargaining agreements. They saw the loss of the B.Ed. Degree and the four-year route as losses to the prestige of the teaching profession. Eventually, through long hours of negotiation, the Association agreed to support our plans.

5. Community colleges which normally provided two-year transfer programs, which were based entirely on our degree requirements were angry. With almost no lead time, we had named their programs unnecessary. Their in-program students would not have a B.Ed. Program to transfer to. Through political processes the Faculty was forced to continue admission to the 4-year B.Ed. Until the Fall of 1998. This places a major fiscal burden on the

program.

My two colleagues, Anne Phelan and Annette La Grange, will describe the process of development and implementation of the program.

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